

Letters to the **EDITOR**

Village unity needed for progress

Since the "splintered group" whom they call Traditional Elders Councils came to be in the Nelson Island/Akulmiut area, the elders started believing that they can do just about anything on their own. They have become dictators of their own villages, outlawing their IRA/traditional and city councils, and most ridiculously, they divided themselves from the younger population in their villages.. Once-close family ties are broken up because of this. Our valuable elders are brainwashed and have gone astray. We younger people are not being listened to, and when we try to talk to the elders, they tell us that we have the mind of the state and follow its ways.

I am proud to say that my community is far from being involved with them. Our wise elders, like late chief Honorable Billy Lincoln Sr., were quick to understand that this move is not going to benefit our community and residents.

It is really sad to see nearby communities where our relatives live fighting with their IRA/traditional council and city council. It is through my own frustrations that I must try to get this message out. I

hope that some younger people who assist these elders might somehow see the brighter side of working with their whole community. Once the community is divided, it cannot progress. But if the community is united, they can make good progress to benefit their communities.

State and federal agencies are withholding funds because there is no federally recognized organization in some of these villages to administer the money. Communities are depriving themselves of projects that could benefit their community and provide jobs for young people, but not because of funding agencies.

The lack of projects and jobs in these communities is forcing some young people to turn to drugs and alcohol. Why must we make it worse when we can get our hands on funding sources to help reduce these kinds of problems?

Worse yet, welfare reform has begun its countdown. Many or all of our villages and village corporations have not come up with cash income to give current welfare recipients jobs once welfare is no longer available to them.

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The leaders, who are not from this area, have brainwashed our wise, loving and trusting elders — making them believe that they can do just about anything on their own. They promised them millions of dollars that they can get at their own discretion. It has been more than five years since their leaders promised that they will

get the money, but where is that money?

I am now and will continue to tell village elders: "You are not yourselves. You must come out of that coma to return to your rightful selves and once again help unite your own communities. God will help."

*James Charlie Sr.
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